RESTORATION REVIEW

Here was built a mighty city. Set upon the highest hill, its brilliance lit the countryside below; and the stories of its richness were carried so far, and told with such feeling, that the name of its architect became a by-word in the farthest lands. And it seemed that all the world was determined to find a place within its walls.

But this glory was too soon lost; for in time its people's hearts were hardened. The baser will surged strong, turning one against the other, brother against brother, in bitter rivalry. Things grew worse. Now the light shed by that city is the light of the fires of war; and, on the troubled breeze, the sound of singing is supplanted by the half-muffled explosions. And those of the outer darkness pass regularly along their ways, uninterested.

—Curtis Lydic

Volume 6, No. 6 **June, 1964**

Volume 6, No. 6 **Leroy Garrett, Editor** **June 1964**

WHEN A CHURCH OF CHRIST MINISTER WALKS OUT

In one of his recent church bulletins, brother Ralph Graham, minister of the Collingswood (New Jersey) Church of Christ, wrote as follows:

On April 11 I announced my resignation as minister of the Collingswood congregation. The last Sunday in May will be our last Sunday in Collingswood. Such a decision has not been without much prayer, meditation, anguish, and tears. It is one of the most difficult decisions I have ever made. To leave those we have loved, to leave the church in which we have labored 12 years from its beginning, to leave our home is like dying a little. But it is dying which must precede the beginning of a new life of service to our Lord that will allow my vision of faith to reach new dimensions on a wider horizon.

In the context of my present situation and connections, I do not enjoy any adequate moral support, opportunity to express and practice what I believe to be the total will of Christ, or the freedom to realize what I consider to be essential Christian goals. No one is to be blamed. How can anyone be blamed for being honest with God, true to himself, and faithful to his sense of duty? We cannot have integrity with constancy without pain, sacrifice, and separations. The sense of duty and loyalty which we feel toward Christ must be stronger than all ties, even family ties.

I have accepted the position of pastor with the First Christian Church (Disciples), 4th and Elm Streets, Colorado City, Texas, beginning the first week in June, 1964. Colorado City is about 65 miles west of Abilene, from which we came to New Jersey 20 years ago this September. I contemplate my new ministry with joy and trepidation. I pray for your understanding, your prayers, and your love. We can never forget our friends here who took us into your very hearts. And we believe that we shall see you again. God love you and keep you.

Two days after brother Graham announced his resignation, one of the members of the Collingswood congregation wrote the following letter:

Dear brother Garrett:

Having been “born in the Church of Christ” and having been a charter member of the Collingswood congregation and under the teaching and influence of Ralph Graham for the past twelve years, I am now in search for the answer to this question: *What are the justifications for our existence, i.e., the Church of Christ?*

What do we have that can't be found elsewhere? What is unique about our *plea?* Why should we continue the struggle unless there are good reasons?

I asked brother Graham to help me with these answers and he stated he could define goals, etc., in a sermon, but since, as you know, he does not see fit to continue with *any* congregation of the Church of Christ, I cannot feel he could be very convincing to me. I am grateful to him for many changes in my own attitudes and beliefs, and I could not go backward to the "old line," but unless I can find purpose in the struggle that makes it worthwhile, then I too might feel the "church around the corner" is just as good.

Many of us have this feeling of emptiness. Much of what has meant a great deal to me all my life is gone, and I do not feel that what is left is sufficient to carry me on in the Church of Christ, except "dogged determination." My convictions are weak now and I need assurance. I know others here need this too.

If you can give me some answers to my questions in a letter, I would appre. ciate it. However, if you could write an article for the *Restoration Review* which could cover these questions, I would be happy, since many could then profit by your efforts.

My dear sister in the Lord:

While I am sure your feelings of frustration and emptiness are painful to you, you must bear in mind that such experiences are often used of the Lord to chasten and nurture the soul, leaving you a better person and a more thoughtful Christian. "For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it" (Heb.12:11).

It will encourage you to know that many throughout our great disciple brotherhood are experiencing what you are now going through. These include a number of young ministers and a few older ones; and it certainly includes numerous rank and file members of the church just like yourself who can never again be satisfied with "the old line," as you put it. I am certain that all this will make us a better people with a greater influence for good in the religious world. It will, of course, cause some to be branded as heretics or modernists or unfaithful, or something; but it will enhance our respect for ourselves, make us more intellectually honest, and easier to live with. Future generations of the Church of Christ will be grateful for the heretics of this generation.

While the Church of Christ is badly in need of reformation, I cannot see that this situation is helped by walking off and leaving it. Reformation must be wrought from within rather than from without. Those of us who would like to see a mote enlightened and a more responsible brotherhood had better stay where we are, so as to be used of God for the edification of our people. I am unable to see that leaving the Church of Christ helps the situation any. For this reason I could not follow the course pursued by your minister who has now gone to the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ).

Let me make it clear at this point, however, that I understand why brother Graham did what he did, and I can sympathize with him in the long struggle that led him to his final decision. He and I have been close friends for almost 25 years, having attended both Abilene Christian and Princeton together. I was with him in some of his initial contacts with leaders of the Disciples of Christ, and I counseled with him as to what seemed best for him under the circumstances. And perhaps it is best for him and for all concerned for him to identify himself with the Christian Churches, but I still regret that it has to be this way even in his case. It is a reflection upon the Churches of Christ that a man like Ralph Graham cannot be provided a context in which to work and worship freely. He left for freedom's sake, and may God bless him in his new endeavors. Yet his leaving is a reflection upon our own narrowness and inflexibility; yea, it is a rebuff to our naivete and to our enslavement of the human spirit.

Ralph walked away from it all simply because he was not being treated as a brother should be treated. Orthodoxy was always breathing down his neck and looking over his shoulder. The *loyal* preachers were eyeing him askance. He had to weigh every word lest he depart from the parry line, and he is not one to kow-tow to anyone's party line. He could not enjoy a free exchange of ideals with his fellow ministers. Some indeed would share with him new frontiers of truth, and even agree with him against "the old line", but it all had to be kept quiet lest they be exposed in the brotherhood journals. You may well know that some of the ministers in that area share brother Graham's convictions, but they have not spoken out as he has. So it might be concluded that he is where he is now *because* of courage, while they remain where they are for a lack of it.

Anyway, Ralph gradually came under suspicion of those who run the Churches of Christ. He was "out of line." He was different. He did not conduct his congregation the way it is done back home in Nashville or Abilene. He neither preached nor behaved as one should who follows to the letter the Church of Christ creed. Consequently he was isolated and rejected. Our clergy used their resources to put the squeeze on. When a man is shut out from the publications media, the lectureships, and the calls for meetings, and when he is no longer consulted about plans and programs, he loses his sense of belonging — and, not least to be sure, his financial security is threatened.

All this the clergy knows, and since the days of Constantine they have used their powers to subjugate and silence the heretics — most of them that is. As for those who have refused to be silenced, well, that history speaks for itself.

We can be thankful that Christendom is free enough that the Ralph Grahams among us (and there are more of them than you might think!) can find refuge in other Christian communities. It is to the credit of the Disciples of Christ that they can find a place for Ralph, and to do so with no embarrassment on anyone's part. They are simply bigger than we are, for when one leaves the Christian Church and comes to the Church of Christ, we

write it up in our papers as some kind of victory for our side. Such a one "learns the truth" and "makes a confession" and is heralded as "a convert from the Christian Church."

It is predictable that our Christian Church brethren will quietly find a place for Ralph, and leave him to serve Christ freely, all without any fanfare. It is also predictable that if our people make any public comment at all, it will be derogatory of Ralph. He will be treated as an apostate from the truth rather than as one who has acted from Christian conviction. We have published books on *Why I Left* in order to explain why some of our preachers came out of all sorts of denominations into the Church of Christ. It is safe to say that we never issue statements on why some of our ministers leave the Church of Christ for other churches. But I must say it would make an interesting book!

Church of Christ leadership is reluctant to face the fact that some of our best men leave us. Ralph Graham is one of the best educated men among us. He has been closely related to the Church of Christ colleges through the years, and in his missionary campaigns in the Northeast he has had the support of hundreds of congregations. For a man like that to walk out should cause us to take a second look at ourselves. But we are more likely to crucify the man than to examine ourselves.

What alternative did Ralph have? He could have stayed on, working for the kind of brotherhood that he believed to be truly Christian, suffering whatever reprisals are necessary. There is a small army of men (intelligent and responsible men) who have long endured the barbs of partyism who are not planning on going anywhere. Though they work within the framework of the Church of Christ party they are not *of* the party. They refuse to be party men. These men and the churches they serve are, of course, marked with proper invectives. Since party men cannot stand non-party men, they would be pleased if all the mavericks *would* go some place like the Christian Church. But these men refuse to leave. They are standing by their posts and working for reform from within, which is the only place from which reforms can be wrought.

I wish Ralph could have done this. I am tempted to say he *should* have done this, for the very ones that nurtured him are the ones that need him the most. But he saw it otherwise, and we must say "to each his own," for it is before his own Master that each of us will stand or fall.

Before I consider your questions, let me add a word about my own feelings about Ralph's departure from the Church of Christ. He is no less my brother now than he was before, and I certainly consider him no less Christian for doing what he believed *he* should do to better serve our Lord. I rather admire his courage, for I know what will be said about him and with what disdain he will be treated. He is no less a part of the great church of God on earth than before. He has simply transferred parties, and I can love him and work with him as an adherent of one party as well as another.

I do not intend to be unkind in referring to ourselves and other groups of disciples as *parties,* but it does no good for us to close our eyes to facts. One is not necessarily a party man just because he is in a party. The Baptist Church is a party or sect within Christendom, but not all Baptists are party people. There are those in all sects who are seeking to rise above partyism and restore the true concept of Christian brotherhood. Ralph might do that as well in one denomination as in another.

It is my conviction that as a general rule people should stay where they are and work for reform from within their own context. This is why I do not urge Baptists to leave their church and come to the Church of Christ. Let them go to work where they are! For the same reason I think Church of Christ folk should stay put. But this is a *general* rule in my thinking. Some people can do a better work if they move into a situation more conducive to reformatory principles. And we must be honest enough to admit that some people might find a more conducive climate by leaving the Church of Christ.

Now for your very provocative question: *What are the justifications for our existence, that is, the Church of Christ? What do we have that can't be found elsewhere? What is unique about our "plea"?*

The orthodox answers to your questions as they would come from the pages of the *Gospel Advocate* or the *Firm Foundation* would be different from what I am going to say. Our naive, orthodox response would simply be that the Church of Christ's existence is justified on the ground that it is *the* New Testament church. If there is no Church of Christ in a town, one is justified in recruiting members from any of the existing denominations on the basis that there would *then* be a true church in that town.

As for what the Church of Christ has that can't be found elsewhere, the orthodox reply is once more unequivocal: *the truth.* We have the right name, the right creed, the right organization, the right worship. We are *right* (period). As for what is unique about our plea, the answer is no less certain: we preach the gospel, the *complete* gospel, and we are the only ones that do; only our preachers are truly "gospel preachers." The answer to the divided state of the churches is for all of them to become Churches of Christ like we are.

Now this is "the old line" that I assume you can no longer accept. But it is Church of Christ orthodoxy, and let me suggest here that part of your problem is that you are no longer a typical "Church of Christer," and so you need not expect to enjoy the same kind of certainty that you once did when you walked the way of orthodoxy. Compare yourself with a Roman Catholic that can no longer accept the infallibility of the pope. In yielding such a position the Roman Catholic surrenders that certainty that comes with absolutism. So he, like yourself, might write of his "feeling of emptiness" and wonder why there should be a Roman Catholic Church.

Emerson may be in order here: “God offers to every mind its choice between truth and repose. Take which you please — you can never have both.” If you choose a free mind over the orthodox “Church of Christ mind,” then you must accept the “struggle” (to use your term) that freedom involves. “For freedom Christ has set us free; stand fast therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery” (Gal. 5:1). Comfort and repose come with absolutism and infallibility. There is no greater ease than that enjoyed by those who are right and who know they are, even at the expense of everyone else being wrong. It is indeed truth that makes men free, but nothing is said about freedom making men comfortable. “Woe to those who are at ease in Zion, and to those who feel secure on the mountain of Samaria” (Amos 6:1).

But to speak more directly to your question as to whether what we call the Church of Christ has any justification for existence, I would answer both *yes* and *no.* In view of the many divisions within Christendom, we have to say that no sect or party has the right to exist. There should never have been the first faction within the body of Christ. Every split within the church of Jesus Christ since apostolic times has been contrary to the will of God. And so the Church of Christ and the Christian Church, and all the rest of the denominations have no right to exist. All the manmade standards that keep the children of God divided should be obliterated, and all the sects should yield themselves to the one great congregation of God, which is constitutionally and essentially one.

The answer is also *yes,* the Church of Christ does have the right to exist, at least for the time being — until such time as it can be absorbed into the church of all the redeemed ones. After all, those of us who make up what we call the Church of Christ did not create the divided religious world. We were born into it; it was more or less dumped upon us by generations past and gone. Perhaps we have done our part in perpetuating the divisions that we inherited, and this is bad, but at least we did not order it this way. So here we are. What do we do?

We should see ourselves very much the same way we see our religious neighbors, and the way many of them see themselves. The better informed Baptists, Episcopalians, and Presbyterians realize the futility of preserving these separate communities. Hence ecumenicity is one of the great ideas of our time. And the idea is that all the existing denominations are to work and pray themselves out of existence — all become the one body of Christ for which our Lord prayed.

So I would say that our own Church of Christ has as much justification for existence as any other religious body. Perhaps it has no more right than any other, but certainly as much. But all of them should be working themselves out of existence, so to speak. This does not mean, of course, that the many congregations would simply disappear, or that there would be one vast congregation in every city. Rather it means that all sectarian

barriers that divide God's people would be removed, that all the congregations in a given city would be one in fellowship and brotherhood.

You ask about our possible uniqueness, and there is certainly more to be said on this point, for surely we have something *distinctive* to offer the religious world in the idea of Restoration. I believe in the Restoration Movement as it was initiated by the Campbells, and that the teachings of our disciple pioneers provide at least a start toward the oneness of the church. We have sources to draw upon — and inspiring historical heritage — that gives uniqueness to our existence.

This is marred in part by the divisions between Churches of Christ and Christian Churches, and then by subdivisions within these. All of us who make up the Restoration Movement have a glorious heritage, providing us a "feel" of apostolic Christianity and a sense of continuity with the primitive church, especially as interpreted by Alexander Campbell. In this respect I am quite willing to be a Campbellite, just as in other areas of thought I am a Platonist or a Jeffersonian. I plan to stay where I am if for no other reason than I am within the tradition of Alexander Campbell. I believe in what he was trying to do for the church universal. Even if we have bungled what he set out to do, I am glad to be around and to be part of the Movement that he and others started, making what little contribution I can to our taking up where he left off.

I consider it a naive and arrogant claim that only we are the true Church of Christ, that all God's children are cornered off in our particular segment. The term "Christian world" is meaningful to me, and it certainly embraces in my thinking more than what in recent generations has come to be known as "the Churches of Christ."

This claim is, of course, an innovation from the plea of the Restoration Movement, whether enunciated by the Campbell group or the Stoneites. Our pioneers never claimed that they were the guardians of the only true church or that the congregations that they started were the only true churches in Christendom. This claim that we are right and all others wrong, that we are *the true* New Testament church, is indeed a very recent claim in Restoration history, beginning with the Church of Christ (especially with the Bible Colleges), a claim that dates back hardly more than half a century.

This touches upon one of the major fallacies in our thinking, and it may serve as part of the answer to your questions. We have confused the Restoration Movement with the church of our lord. The church was a reality long before there was a Restoration Movement, and it will continue to be a reality, irrespective to what happens to the Restoration Movement. We err in supposing that the New Testament church has been restored and that we are it, thus equating the idea of Restoration with the church itself.

The Campbells, the Stones, and the Raccoon Smiths conceived of their work as a unity movement *within* the universal church of God, which they understood to be in existence already, but in a divided state. Their intention was not to restore *the church,* for one cannot

restore that which already is; but they sought to restore certain qualities and principles *(institutions* and *propositions* Campbell called them) *to* the church.

There is an important difference between restoring the church and restoring certain features to the church. Take the old Rembrandt painting that is uncovered from the basement of a German monastery. Experts could speak of restoring the original color and luster of the painting, but not the painting itself. This might involve the removal of grime and dirt, or even a bit of touching up, but it is no more nor less a Rembrandt than it was before. It is simply a *better* Rembrandt in that it now reveals the full glory of the artist's skill.

So it is with the church. Since the days of our lord there has *always* been the church of Christ: "On this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it" (Matt. 16:18). Alexander Campbell knew this, as did Barton Stone and Raccoon Smith. They had no illusion about restoring *the church.* They knew the church was in existence, and that they were part of it, whether as Baptists or Presbyterians. And yet they concluded that there should be no such thing as Baptists or Presbyterians, for this means division within the body of Christ.

They sought, therefore, to restore *to* the church the unity for which the lord prayed. To achieve this unity meant that sectarian names and creeds that divide the saints of God must be discarded. It means the restoration of such institutions as immersion and the lord's Supper, and it involved more responsible interpretation of the scriptures. More than all this, however, it meant the reformation. of one's personal life, that it might be conformed to the image of the Christ.

They had no intention of starting a new church, the *right* church, but of reforming the one that already existed amidst sectarianism. Theirs was a movement *within* the church, dedicated to the task of doing what the expert did for Rembrandt's painting.

This, my dear sister, is our task as I see it. As a part of the Church of Christ we are first of all the lord's, to be used by Him for His glory. And if we are His and He is ours, we have no reason for any "feeling of emptiness." We can serve Him where we are, irrespective of how imperfect the context may be. We can think of ourselves as part of a noble movement working for the cause of unity of all God's people. If it appears to us that the Church of Christ has lost sight of all this, and has become nothing more than another sect, that does not mean that you and I cannot work and pray for what we think should be.

You say, "Much of what has meant a great deal to me all my life is gone and I do not feel that what is left is sufficient to carry me on in the Church of Christ, except 'dogged determination.' My convictions are weak and I need assurance. I know others need this too."

What is it, my sister, that has meant “a great deal” to you all your life that you no longer have? The lord Jesus Christ? What is it that is “left” that you find insufficient to carry you through? Is it the lord who died for you?

Has your “assurance” been in the absolutes of the Church of Christ or in the grace of God through Christ? Paul could say, “Our sufficiency is from God” (2 Cor. 3:5). He speaks of Christ as being everything to him: “Christ is all and in all” (Col. 3:11). If Christ is yours, if you live in his loving grace and mercy, you have no cause to feel forlorn. let the lord speak to you as he did to the apostle: “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9).

Suppose “the church around the corner is just as good” as the Church of Christ? So what? If you lived in my home town, you might find the church around the corner to be another Church of Christ, and that it will have nothing to do with the other, nor the other with it, for each contends that the other is not as good as itself. I sometimes have that very feeling: that the Adventists or the Episcopalians down the street or around the corner are *better* than we are. If you measure Christianity by love, mercy, goodness, and brotherly kindness, I suspect there are a lot of them that are better than we are. This only leaves me thankful for what goodness there is, wherever it is, and encourages me to make all people better, especially ourselves.

You mention that it is only by “dogged determination” that you can carry on now that some of the assurances about the Church of Christ have slipped from you. Bless you, you are more orthodox in your Church of Christ faith than you suppose you are. Oh, how we know so little about the grace of God! This “dogged determination” you speak of never brings *spiritual* satisfaction. This is part of our problem: the idea that it is by our own effort and our own works that we are saved. Some among us are saying that it is our “dogged determination” that causes our neurotic guilt feelings. How damaging it is to the soul for one to suppose that it is by his own strength that he attains unto God. We try too hard. Our legalistic notion of salvation coming only by an exact response to the letter of the law can only kill the spirit. We doggedly climb seven rungs of the ladder only to come crashing to the ground the next day. Will we never learn that we are not under law but under GRACE! (Rom. 6:14).

Beloved sister, I urge upon you the force of Paul’s statement in Rom. 5:6: “While we were yet helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly,” and in Philip. 4:13: “I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.” Always we are “helpless” when we are on our own. Our strength must come from God. Our “dogged determination” is worthless before God. We must yield ourselves to the leading of the Holy Spirit, and let Him bear in us the fruit of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control.

Let me close this letter that is now much too long by a reference to the mariners lost at sea, who radioed for information as to where they might find a stream of fresh water. Once they gave their location, the reply came back, “Let down your buckets where you are; you are in fresh water.”

As I see it, you and I can find fresh water right where we are. I see no reason to run off somewhere. Let’s let down our buckets where we are, believing always that the water that He gives to us will become a spring of water welling up to eternal life. (John 4:15).

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PANEL ON UNITY

On June 17 a panel discussion was held in the meeting place of the Sequoia Park Community Church of Christ in Denton, Texas. Three panelists, M. J. Cunningham of Dallas, Sam Rodgers of Dallas, and Leroy Garrett of Denton, discussed the relationship of certain differences of conviction to the general problem of Christian unity. Specific issues were mentioned which have constituted barriers to unity for many years. Among these were divided Bible classes, instrumental music, congregational cooperation, and multiple containers in the communion service. No attempt was made to offer answers as to the right or wrong in these matters, but an attempt was made to ascertain what sort of working unity may be enjoyed in the face of such disagreements. Though the panel members represent slightly different backgrounds and points of view, there was general agreement among them that whatever unity we may hope to achieve, it cannot be a unity which insists upon complete conformity in conviction.

This discussion was not intended to provide or point to a decisive solution to the problem of division. One thing it did accomplish was to demonstrate that brethren who do disagree *can* enjoy fellowship, if only to sit down together for a prayerful study of their problems. We hope for more of these gatherings in Denton, and recommend to concerned Christians everywhere that this approach be patiently tried among them. It’s not so hard! — *Curtis Lydic*

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PARTY TRUMPETING

Robert R. Meyers

Anyone who regrets seeing any Christian group go promotional, with gimmicks galore and razzle-dazzle advertising, will wince in pain at sight of the May 15 *Christian Chronicle,* a news organ of the Churches of Christ. For in that issue readers are regaled with stories of the World's Fair triumph of that church in language which approaches sheer blatancy.

A headline shouts: CHURCH SHEDS 'INFERIORITY COMPLEX' AT WORLD'S FAIR. Although this is not explained in detail, it apparently means that in terms of TV and newspaper coverage, dollars spent, and lavishness of surroundings, the sect which considers itself the only true church of the Lord has finally arrived. No need for any of its members, even in the Texas and Tennessee strongholds, to feel inferior any longer.

Thirty years in this group have convinced me that any inferiority its members have must be because of material poverty and lack of public recognition. Certainly there has been no feeling of inferiority about the group's doctrinal correctness and standing with God. Often, instead, the world has observed an assurance bordering on arrogance. So the headline must refer to a feeling through the years that we were not quite as good as other religionists because we hadn't their buildings and their reputations.

Now we have arrived, having spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on a slick promotional stunt. And the proof of our arrival lies in our having been mentioned by newspapers, radio and television. The editor fairly chortles as he notes that "the big news media took notice too." He is inordinately proud of the 2800 who gathered in the Pavilion and twice gloats over the fact that "a university chorus the night before drew only 300!"

With what sadness and regret must thoughtful men read such comments. One keeps hoping that the old habit of comparing ourselves to others, to their disparagement, has at last yielded up the ghost. But it lingers on. The editor informs us that our exhibit was better than anybody else's, that only the Seventh Day Adventist exhibit could compare with it. The *New York Times* covered the story as it related to the formal dedication of the Protestant Center, which, the editor boasts, "didn't draw a fraction of the crowd our services did."

The climaxes of partisan pride remind one of some second-rate Madison Avenue huckster's sales pitch. "It was a big time, brethren," we are informed. "Afterwards the Fair grounds were almost like one of our lectureships... but not quite. However it was wonderful for a change to see a fellow Christian every once in a while instead of never at all."

It has to be seen in print to believe it, and even then there will be many who love the party so much more than they love the Kingdom of God that they will suppose my words to be only a cold, uncaring sneer at success. If so, it is a pity, because one's eyes ought to be wide open to the egotistic exclusiveness of such words. "A fellow Christian" is clearly

one who is a member of the party. It excludes even the immersed believers who might be walking around from the Baptists, the Christian Churches, and others.

I can remember when Church of Christ ministers scoffed, from pulpit and press, at the antics of our Southern Baptist neighbors as they went through this razzle-dazzle stage. We lampooned their gimmicks (rightly) as unworthy of Christianity and as an affront to the dignity of religion. But times have changed. The Baptists have gotten a bit more dignified, strengthened greatly the academic standards of their schools, and upgraded the reverence of their services. And we are now happily laying hold on every promotional device we can think of to make the world sit up and notice us.

There is no point in asking what is the matter with us, because the answer has already been given by the editor. We have felt inferior all these years because our buildings were not so nice, nor our press relations so warm, as those of our religious neighbors. Now we feel on a par with them, having outdone most of them in our World's Fair exhibit.

I am in no laughing mood. I feel sad. We have forgotten what New Testament Christianity really is, we who have talked so much of going by the Book. We no longer remember that the Kingdom works silently, like leaven in the loaf, and grows quietly, like the blade of corn and the developing ear.

We are so far away from all that now that we forget to imagine how inferior the twelve apostles must have felt. Only a dozen of them. No building, no advertising, no enormous crowds, no stunts, no glossy coverage, no applauding world. How they ever managed to survive at all, with so vast an inferiority complex, defies the imagination.

But the picture is not altogether dark. The Church of Christ is full of decent, intelligent folk who are much wiser than many who make their talks and write their papers. They will pass on through this stage of horn-blowing and party elation. It is only another phase of growth, like that one in human development when the adolescent suddenly finds ro his astonishment that he has muscles as big as the other fellow's. And when it is over, the good people who work for the Kingdom within the Churches of Christ will quietly and cooperatively find ways to spread the influence of the Divine Community.

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CAN WE JUSTIFY "THE PLAN OF SALVATION"?

Floyd Mackler

As Christians in the Restoration Movement seek to reevaluate their position, it is likely that one subject which will receive attention will be that of "the plan of salvation." Variously known as "the terms of pardon," "man's part in redemption," "terms of membership," 'the ancient order of things," "the positive divine law" and "gospel

obedience" the insisted formula for salvation, according to most leaders in the restoration movement, is as follows: (a) faith in Christ's deity, (b) repentance from known sin, (c) confession of this faith before witnesses, (d) baptism, by immersion, for the remission of sins, (e) faithful continuation in Christian life and growth unto death. Our purpose in this essay will be to examine the reasons why this *Ordo Salutis* (the order of salvation) must be reevaluated and to suggest some of the necessary principles which must receive fuller treatment if we are to justify the "plan of salvation."

BASIC PRINCIPLES IN "THE PLAN OF SALVATION"

In order to understand why there is a need for a fresh look at "the plan of salvation" we must establish some of the basic ideas which stand behind the particular schema which is proposed. First, it is important that in "the plan of salvation" we make reference to the means by which God's pardon of sin is applied to the life of a sinner. In other words, "the plan" *has to do with the application and not the accomplishment of redemption.* Redemption has been accomplished by Christ but the application of that redemption takes place by means of "the plan of salvation." The complete work of redemption, of course, includes both the accomplishment and the application. In "the plan of salvation", however, the emphasis falls upon man's part in accepting Christ rather than Christ's' part in redeeming man.

Second, *the stages in "the plan of salvation" are arranged in a definite sequence.* While some variation is admitted by some advocates of this scheme it is generally insisted that there can be no exchanging of the places held by baptism and faith or faithful continuance and baptism. It is firmly held that certain stages in "the plan" are arranged in a very definite and unalterable order. The presence of this ordering is believed to be obvious in such biblical passages as John 3:3.5; Ephesians 1:13; Acts 2:38 and Mark 16:16.

Third, *the stages may be either logically or chronologically arranged in sequence.* It is not necessary that the arrangement of order be considered as a chronological sequence. A logical sequence or arrangement is sufficient for the relationship between repentance and faith or confession and faith. However, a chronological arrangement seems necessary between faith and baptism.

Finally, *the application of salvation is never thought of as one simple and indivisible act.* It always comprises a series of acts, events or processes. According to "the plan of salvation" the steps are all distinct and none of them is capable of a full definition in terms of the others (although there is clearly an overlapping in some cases). Each stage is believed to hold a distinct and unique place in the application of redemption. For example, repentance (while leading to baptism) is a separate act from baptism and neither of the two acts can be defined in terms of the other. There is always something different between the two acts. The same is true of the other stages in "the plan of salvation".

WHY QUESTION - "THE PLAN OF SALVATION"

The reason why the "plan of salvation" stands in need of evaluation is because of certain observations which can be made in regard to the influence which preoccupation with "the plan" has meant. We intend to take notice of some of the results which come when a people give themselves to an ardent and absorbing defense of "the plan of salvation." Not all of these results follow necessarily from the concept of "the plan of salvation" itself but they stand, nevertheless, as psychological and emotional reactions which take place when the chief concern in salvation falls upon "the plan of salvation."

1. *A spirit of condemnation* often exists toward those who either cannot or will not accept "the plan of salvation" in the form presented. When one is given to a complete defense of "the plan" he must resist, at all costs, any deviation from or corruption of that form. Sometimes, this leads to a subtle but definite attitude of judgment against those who fail to fall into line with the established prescription for salvation.

2. *The existence of fear and joylessness* often becomes evident in the lives of many individuals. Because the spirit of "the plan of salvation" places not only undue but unscriptural emphasis upon the part which man plays in salvation countless Christians lose their joy of giving amiss on the way to salvation. Any serious examination of any one of the stages in "the plan of salvation" can result in self-condemnation and guilt. The basis for this tragic situation lies in the serious questioning which will and must always plague the human consciousness when it tries to formalize the valid application of salvation. In confession, for example, few realize that it is to be a confession of Christ as Lord, not merely as Saviour, in order to be efficacious unto salvation (Roman 10:9). It is highly doubtful that most of us realized either this fact or the implications of it at the time that we confessed faith in Christ before witnesses. The same results can be secured whenever one perseveres in his reflection upon any of the stages in "the plan of salvation."

3. *A strange spirit of self-satisfaction arises*. Once an individual believes that he has faithfully obeyed the stages in "the plan" he arrives at a static relationship with God. The result is just the opposite in this case from that described previously. The reason is because some people are capable of a closer scrutiny of their motives and actions than others. In some cases, therefore, the tendency exists to develop a religious life that is cold, lifeless and stifled because one's relationship to God has been codified into established overt actions. The entire redemptive process has been systematized into certain prescribed forms of action and belief. When one has satisfied the conditions laid down he has entered into the state of salvation. Often the result is his isolation from a personal sense of responsibility or of the Divine intention to transform him into the image of Christ.

4. Diligence for "the plan of salvation" also can lead to *a neglect of God's grace and the. importance of faith.* God's part in grace and justification is reduced to a mere preparatory for salvation and, in the last analysis, the really decisive thing is the human

activity. We shall return to this subject later but it must be noted that countless individuals have passed through the proper steps in "the plan of salvation" without understanding the absolute decisive significance of God's grace. The same can be stated concerning the part played by faith in salvation. Faith comes to be considered as only one step in man's obedience towards salvation. This can be illustrated by the teachings drawn from a very popular series of film-strips employed by many in the restoration movement for teaching on salvation. According to the presentation given, salvation is like making a journey from California to Florida. One must leave the state of California and pass through intervening states before he has arrived at Florida. The implication clearly is that faith stands as only one step on the way to salvation.

5. Concern with "the plan of salvation" also seems to lead to *a consciousness of legalism and "works righteousness."* Any definite turning from the basis of salvation to the application of salvation stands exposed to the danger of making the chief concern no longer to be "what God has done" but rather "what must I do?" When this occurs the only difference between the advocates of "the plan of salvation" and the teachings of Catholicism is that different conditions are stipulated before man can receive the benefits of Christ's death. No longer is Christ seen as the way of salvation. What took place in the incarnation, crucifixion and resurrection of Christ is only given marginal significance, the really "crucial" thing being that which takes place here and now in the individual. Nothing is more stultified and futile than the constant exhortation to "do thus and thus" and the neglecting of the one thing which essentially marks Christianity: "Thus has God acted, once and for all!"

6. Finally, concern with "the plan" often results in *the neglect of certain steps* even within "the plan" itself. If, after all is said, the actual entrance into the state of salvation occurs at baptism then this stage — rather than faith, repentance or confession — is going to receive the major attention and emphasis. The result is an effort to "short-cut" the route until countless peoples are rushed to the final stage without fully coming to grip with some of the "preparatory stages." This is particularly evident in our neglect of the importance and working of faith.

HOW JUSTIFY - "THE PLAN OF SALVATION"

How then can we continue to speak of "the plan of salvation" in the schema which has been used in the past? Can we justify the continuation of such a presentation? It appears evident that we can only if we begin to give more emphasis to the two principles of grace and faith. Only as we view the "plan of salvation" in the focus of the decisive movement of God's grace and the importance of faith can "the plan of salvation" be properly presented.

The essential idea of the doctrine of grace is that God is for us. By grace is meant the active disposition of God to which everything that can be called salvation is traceable (Ephesians 1:7). Not only is God for us but he has moved and acted effectively towards us. Grace is the breaking into this world of the ineffable and decisive love of God. Because of this, throughout the New Testament grace is from the first to the last the atmosphere in which Christians live and move and have their being. It is the all-comprehensive and constant presupposition of faith. In grace the really decisive thing has already happened-the great act of salvation has already taken place. What occupies the attention and loyalty of the Christian is not some new ideal to be attained or some new law to be kept but the position which is already achieved in Christ and revealed in the decisive movement of God (Titus 2:11-14 and Romans 1:16-17). In order, therefore, to give a healthy and scriptural context to the "plan of salvation" we must place more accent upon the gracious and dramatic invasion of God into this world.

This movement is not called forth by merit or worthiness on the part of man (2 Timothy 1:9) but is the free spontaneous outflowing of God's compassion (Ephesians 2:4-9, Romans 11:6 cf. 4:4 and 5:8). An entirely new perspective is given to man when he apprehends the movement of God's grace into the world. It is now realized that everything which man is called upon to do pre-supposes what God has already done. In fact, the obligations laid upon man can only be truly understood in the light of the new relationship with God that forms the basis of our obligations. Any treatment of the "plan of salvation" is inadequate if it does not show that righteousness is a gift (Romans 4:16) bestowed because of God's actions and not because of ours.

Again, grace must be understood in its strong personal presentation as centered completely in the Lord Jesus Christ. The plan of grace comes into complete expression in the life of Christ (Titus 2:11,3:4). In *Him* the great work of redemption takes place (Romans 3:24, 25 and 1 John 4:10-19). Grace is not only revealed in Christ; it is actualized in Christ. He is in Himself the self-giving of God to man. Any consideration of "the plan of salvation" must, therefore, *insist at every point* that Christ Himself is the objective ground of our salvation. We must cut off every consideration which does not confess that Christ is the plan of salvation. Not only must this be confessed — it must be announced in terms not uncertain that "the plan of salvation" is determined by salvation in Christ.

"The plan of salvation" can be justified only if it operates with a personal encounter of Christ with men through the word of the gospel. Grace is not a quasi-physical force applied to the soul by means of some ordinance or command. Grace is related to the personality of Christ and to apprehend it we must have an intimate attachment to the person of Christ. The real power of the Christian message is that the life of faith is essentially the life of personal dependence upon Him who has taken into His own hands our spiritual welfare.

Let us now consider the nature of faith as presented in the scriptures. First, we must assert that we are justified by, from, through and upon our faith (Romans 1:17; 3:22, 26, 28, 30; 5:1. Gal. 2:16; 3:24. Phil. 3:9). This is not a mere academic issue but one that goes to the very root of our personal relationship with God. Faith is not one step in the "plan of salvation" — it is man's entire and appropriate response to the grace of God. Once we understand the precise nature of faith and its all-determinative role in man's response we shall have taken another step forward in correcting our presentation of "the plan of salvation."

To aid in this matter let us suggest that faith be understood as the humble self-surrender of the individual to Jesus Christ. Faith, in so far as it relates to redemption, is thus always directed towards God's grace and is acutely conscious of dependency upon Jesus Christ. Faith is the trust that Christ alone is our righteousness before God (Philippians 3:8f). It is the abandoning of all reliance upon personal efforts and goodness and the insistence upon complete reliance upon Christ. Faith cannot be reduced to one distinct point in the way of salvation. Understood as humble self-surrender to God faith is rescued from such a false consideration and the way is opened for greater appreciation of the truth that man does not bring his own contribution to salvation. Faith must be kept as the all-determinative principle in man's part in salvation. When we realize that Christ is the way of salvation and that faith is a personal relationship of surrender to Christ then we understand that salvation is by faith — that faith must have universal and absolute significance.

Having insisted that the relation of faith is one in which all claims of and for man cease and everything is thrown over onto the working of God we can envision the unique and complementary relationship between grace and faith. The two principles supplement each other. In grace God has surrendered Himself to man, and has given Himself to man for personal intimacy and relationship. In faith man surrenders Himself to God — returns his love and loyalty to the one who has loved him so greatly. In faith man accepts the relationship made possible and demanded by God in grace. God's grace is the objective provision for man's return to God — calling upon man to realize that the true center of his life is outside of himself in God. Faith is both the entrance into and the continuing in the way of reliance upon God. Faith is the acceptance of the supreme presupposition of grace. God calls man to a creaturely dependence upon grace and man asserts to and appropriates the role of a creature by faith.

God calls into being a new relationship with Himself and provides the opportunity for real fellowship with Himself. Man freely turns to God for renewed strength, in humble faith in God's forgiveness and good will, and observes the grace of God releasing new forces into the personality that walks by faith. Only in this light can the "plan of salvation" glory in the Lord (1 Corinthians 1:31). "For this cause it is of faith, that it may be

according to grace; to the end that the promise may be sure to all the seed" (Romans 4:16). — *Dexter, Oregon*

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THE CHURCHES OF CHRIST

If the phrase "churches of Christ" in Romans 16:16 reveals the *name* of the churches doing the saluting, then some New Testament churches were not included. The *name* of the church at Corinth (according to this line of thinking) was "The Church of God," and the name of the church at Thessalonica was "The Church of the Thessalonians in God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ" (pretty fancy!). None of the other churches addressed by New Testament epistles was addressed "by name," so we don't know what their names were. Consequently, it is somewhat a mystery as to what churches Paul had in mind when he said "the churches of Christ salute you."

The solution to the "mystery" should be obvious: no "naming" was intended, here in Rom. 16:16 or anywhere else. Be not deceived or confused by the pretensions of exclusive-minded Christians. To use the name "Church of Christ" is a distinction only in the eyes of those who have been trained to equate the wearing of a name with fidelity to the Lord. Where this idea originated, and why, is the real mystery. It certainly is not based upon scripture.

THINK OF THIS

Do you like for your fellow employees to *criticize* the way you do your job, even though the boss may be satisfied with your work? No? Well, remember that your fellow-Christian is a fellow-servant, answerable only to the Master.

Do you like for people to scold your children, or your children to scold one another? No? Well, remember that your fellow-Christian has a Father who is capable of disciplining him.

How do you like for people to make disparaging remarks about your property or abuse some belonging of yours which you hold very dear? You don't appreciate it? Well, remember that your fellow-Christian is a purchased possession of the Son of Almighty God, bought with the highest of prices, and cherished intensely. "Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me." (Matthew 25:40)

ON UNITY

Editor:

That we need to seek unity in the church, I agree. That we are too partyish, I agree also. But that we can agree, or have unity on the person of Christ and *his* Lordship, etc., without agreement on the Bible, I disagree strongly. "Person" suggests neither unity or division, fellowship or schism. We could agree as to Jesus' being the Christ, but that is about all, one way or the other. Now, this leaves all the believers in Christ without a basis for unity. It is either the New Testament or nothing. Nothing else could unite us.

Restoration Review will do some good in tempering our attitudes in the church, but it will be limited in its effect so long as it offers nothing as a basis for unity. Love alone, "union" alone will not achieve what you aim for.

We can be united on what the Bible says. What it doesn't say is the basis for division. One-cuppers bind their opinion, cuppers bind theirs, etc. A man who can recognize an opinion of his own as an opinion is really a discerning fellow, though. We don't have enough of these fellows. If you cultivate opinion-discerners, then you will indeed do a great service for churches of Christ. In this I hope you succeed. — *E. D. W.*

WHAT CAUSES CONDEMNATION?

1. Are children born into a state of condemnation? Are they bound by and amenable to Christ's law (Rom. 8:1-3)? If they are not bound by New Testament law in childhood, when do they become bound by such law? At "accountability"?
2. Assuming that a child is not bound by New Testament law, is it possible for him to sin? If it were possible for him to sin while not amenable to Christ's law, would that sin be imputed to him (Rom. 5:13)?
3. At whatever time a child maturing into adulthood does become bound by New Testament law, for what purpose is that law bound upon him? Does it come upon him to save him or to condemn him? If it comes upon him to save him, what caused him to become lost? Sin?

4. How could sin cause one to be come lost prior to his becoming bound by law? How can he sin before coming under law? How could sin be imputed to him?
5. If the law of Christ comes upon a youngster to condemn him, how can Christ be portrayed as the bringer of salvation? If the binding of his authority makes transgression and condemnation possible, how much easier to solve the problem of sin by removing all law. Did Christ come to bring condemnation (John 3:17), or to save an already dead and lost world (2 Cor. 5:14)?
— *R. Wright*

IN HEART OR ON STONE?

A child of God is amenable to the will of Christ only to the extent that it is written in his own heart. God promised that the day would come when his people would respond to a covenant written in the heart, versus the "tables of stone" concept of the Old Testament. I have at least five reasons for believing that for us that day has come. They are listed as follows:

1. To contend that the New Testament contains a written law to which all must conform identically is to cry for a return to the bondage (the "law pots") of Israel.

2. Christ taught that the law is *broken* in the heart (Matt. 7:28).

3. Paul said that "where there is no law there is no transgression." Since transgression is in the heart, that is where the law is.

4. A law not written in the New Testament may exist only in the imagination of a Christian, but if he violates his conscience with respect to that imagined law, he violates that law in his heart and commits sin (Rom. 14; 23).

5. Christ taught that one's obligation is in proportion to his ability ("To whom much is given, of him shall much be required," etc.); therefore, obligation would vary from one individual to another.

Why then should we withdraw from a brother over a difference relative to "written" law?
— *P. Francis*

THE LORD'S DAY CONTRIBUTION

Surely Christians are a tradition loving people! It is so evident that several of the practices of which our brethren make such a point came into practice without real authority from the scriptures, and have persevered mostly because of our disinclination to change anything; and these things have become so firmly established now that to suggest a change is tantamount to heresy. For example, the Sunday collection. This custom has been the sale basis for financing the work of the Churches of Christ for some years. Not only is

this method of finance universally accepted and followed among these groups, but it has been made a matter of doctrine, and the consensus of opinion is that any group which employs any other method for gathering funds is unscriptural and therefore sectarian.

The truth of the matter is that there is no authority in 1 Corinthians 16:1,2 for any extended or perpetuated system of finance. There is not even any authority here for the church, as such, to own money at all. Each man was to *lay by him* until Paul's coming, and no longer. Then the money was to be picked up and taken on to Judea. Now, when are we going to quit pretending to ourselves that we have here God's plan for "church finance," and accept this record for just what it is — a historical account of a temporary need and the temporary means given to provide for it.

— *S. Taggart*

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A few of our subscribers received the April issue instead of the May issue at our last mailing. We regret this mistake. If those who did not get the proper issue will drop us a card, we will see to it that you get the May number we are saving for you.

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RESTORATION REVIEW is published monthly (except July and August) at 1201 Windsor Dr., Denton, Texas. Leroy Garrett, Editor. Second class permit at Denton, Texas. Subscription rate is $1.00 per annum; 50 cents in clubs of 6 or more.

Address all mail to: 1201 Windsor Drive, Denton, Texas 76201.*